



U.S. AGENCY FOR  
INTERNATIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT

LAC-IEE-99-30

## ENVIRONMENTAL THRESHOLD DECISION

**Activity Location** : Central America Region, Haiti and the Dominican Republic

**Activity Title** : Hurricane Reconstruction Inter-Agency Agreement with the U.S. Department of Agriculture: Damaged Rural Watersheds Rehabilitated (SPO 1)

**Activity Number** : 598-0865

**Funding** : \$7,243,019

**Life of Project** : 1999-2001

**IEE Prepared by** : Eric Fajer, LAC/RSD/Environment

**Recommended Threshold Decision** : Categorical Exclusion/Negative Determination/Deferred Determination

**Bureau Threshold Decision** : Concur with Recommendation

### Comments:

Pursuant to 22 CFR 216.2(c)(2)(i), (iii), (xii), and (xiv), a Categorical Exclusion is issued to all activities, as specified in the IEE, involving education, training, and technical assistance, and other actions that will not have an adverse impact on the natural or physical environment.


A Negative Determination is issued to activities associated with aerial seeding, rehabilitation of rural housing, and soil and water conservation. Significant adverse environmental impacts are not reasonably foreseeable from implementation of these activities. Potential minor impacts will be mitigated through the development and implementation of environmental guidelines, a copy of which shall be submitted to LAC Bureau Environmental Officer for his records.

A Deferral is issued to activities under Intermediate Results 1 and 2 which have as yet to be clearly identified. A supplemental IEE for these activities shall be submitted to LAC Bureau Environmental Officer (BEO) for approval. Note that country or region-based USDA or inter-agency workplans will not be approved by the USAID Inter-Agency Agreement manager until the country- or region-respective Supplemental IEE has been approved by LAC BEO.

A Supplemental IEE shall be submitted to LAC BEO for any activities not specified in the IEE and the Program Description (Annex A) of the Interagency agreement, or if during design or implementation it becomes apparent that significant negative impacts might result from already described activities. Furthermore, in the event that pesticides are promoted, procured and/or used

as part of these Hurricane Reconstruction activities, a Supplemental IEE following the procedures set forth in 22 CFR 216.3(b)(1) shall be submitted to LAC Bureau Environmental Officer for approval prior to implementation of such activities.

A summary of this decision shall be incorporated into the Interagency Agreement with USDA.

 Date 8/27/99  
John McMahon  
Acting Bureau Environmental Officer  
Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean

|         |   |  |
|---------|---|--|
| Copy to | : | Tim Mahoney, Director, LAC/RSD             |
| Copy to | : | John McMahon, LAC/RSD/E                    |
| Copy to | : | Anne Dix, REA/CA                           |
| Copy to | : | Carlene Yocum, Caribbean Regional Forester |
| Copy to | : | Tully Cornick, LAC/CEN                     |
| Copy to | : | Susan Hill, LAC/SPM                        |
| Copy to | : | IEE File                                   |



## Initial Environmental Examination

**Activity Location** : Central America Region, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic

**Activity Title** : Hurricane Reconstruction Inter-Agency Agreement with the U.S. Department of Agriculture: Damaged Rural Watersheds Rehabilitated: SpO 1

**Activity Number** : 598-0865

**Funding** : \$7,243,019

**Life of Project** : 1999 - 2001

**IEE Prepared by** : Eric Fajer, LAC/RSD/E

**Recommended Threshold Decision** : Categorical Exclusion/Negative Determination/Deferred Determination

**Program Summary:** Under this Special Objective (SpO), the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will provide training and technical assistance to address immediate needs for the rehabilitation of streambeds and banks before the rainy seasons of 1999 and 2000 cause further damage. Without urgent remedial action, even normal rainfall levels will severely affect agriculture, coastal aquatic industries and natural resources, water quality, infrastructure, and human lives. USDA assistance under this SpO will allow rehabilitated streambeds and banks to accommodate expected water run-off in the short-term. USDA also will provide assistance to develop community housing that is more disaster resistant. Assistance also will ensure the long-term rehabilitation of watersheds and will build local capacity to manage rural watersheds for the long term.

Rehabilitation efforts will assist those rural communities most affected by Hurricane Mitch and Hurricane Georges. Technical expertise will be drawn from all relevant USDA technical agencies and land grant colleges and universities.

The SpO, "Damaged Rural Watersheds Rehabilitated through Strengthened Local Capacity," will be achieved through accomplishing four intermediate results. These are:

- IR1: Emergency watershed protection implemented for critical sites.
- IR2: Land and water resources rehabilitated in priority watersheds.

IR3: Rural housing rehabilitated.

IR4: Local capacity to mitigate future storm effects strengthened.

### **Program Description:**

#### **IR 1: Emergency watershed protection implemented for critical sites.**

These activities will help: (1) prevent massive loss of fertile soil from stream banks; (2) retain agricultural lands along streambanks; (3) prevent sedimentation and decline of water quality; (4) reduce the threat of future flooding; (5) protect roads, life and property; and (6) safeguard coastal aquatic industries, especially shrimp.

Expected activities include:

- Complete initial assessments.
- Identify stakeholders.
- Develop an implementation plan.
- Develop a performance monitoring plan.
- Obtain and analyze remote sensing imagery showing areas of heavy hurricane impact.
- Provide emergency watershed protection teams to work simultaneously with key field counterparts to identify needs and recommend interventions.
- Provide training workshops on how to correct emergency watershed problems.
- Adapt USDA manuals to develop technical materials, in Spanish.
- Provide short-term advisors for on-going guidance on implementing emergency watershed protection and land rehabilitation activities.
- Help host governments establish systems to utilize monetized food aid resources.

**Recommended Environmental Determination:** Developing implementation and monitoring plans, completing assessments, identifying stakeholders, obtaining and analyzing remote sensing imagery, adapting USDA technical manuals into Spanish, and helping host governments establish systems of monetized food aid resources warrant **Categorical Exclusions** under 22 CFR 216.2(c)(2)(i) -- "Education, technical assistance, or training programs except to the extent such programs include activities directly affecting the environment (such as construction of facilities, etc.)" -- 22 CFR 216.2(c)(2)(iii) -- "Analyses, studies, academic or research workshops and meetings," -- and 22 CFR 216.2(c)(2)(xii) -- "Food for development programs conducted by food recipient countries under Title III of Pub. L. 480, when achieving USAID's objectives in such programs does not require knowledge of or control over the details of the specific activities conducted by the foreign country under such program."

Providing teams to identify needs and recommend interventions, training workshops on how to correct emergency watershed problems, and advisors for implementing emergency watershed protection and land rehabilitation activities could have indirect but, nevertheless, significant impacts on the environment. This is because these activities are primarily advising others on activities that might significantly impact the environment. At this time, because the specifics of these activities are not yet determined, they warrant **Deferred Determinations**.

Individual supplemental IEEs will be submitted for these activities, for each country and/or region under the Inter-Agency Agreement. Supplemental IEEs will be based on the information developed for country specific workplans described in section F of the Schedule with the Inter-Agency Agreement between USDA and USAID for these activities.

Country or Region-based workplans will not be approved by the USAID Inter-Agency Agreement manager until the country-respective (or region-respective) supplemental IEE has been approved by the LAC Bureau Environmental Officer. The USAID Inter-Agency Agreement manager will work with USDA over the period of the workplan development to assure that implementation of USAID environmental regulations is effective and does not unnecessarily delay program implementation.

## **IR2: Land and water resources rehabilitated in priority watersheds.**

These activities will help: (1) identify croplands in need of rehabilitation; (2) reclaim damaged agricultural lands, especially along streamsides; (3) track progress of land rehabilitation; (4) stabilize hillsides through reforestation, afforestation, and agroforestry practices; (5) reclaim damaged coastal aquaculture; (6) decrease flood threats to selected farmer-to-market access roads; and (7) reduce fire threat from downed timber.

Expected activities include:

- Complete initial assessments.
- Identify stakeholders.
- Develop an implementation plan.
- Develop a performance monitoring plan.
- Obtain and analyze remote sensing imagery for heavily impacted areas.
- Provide agricultural land reclamation teams to identify croplands in need of rehabilitation and to recommend interventions.
- Review aerial photos and satellite images with field reconnaissance to identify sites in need of reforestation, afforestation or protection.
- Train local counterparts in hand labor methods of land reclamation and provide guidance on heavy equipment methods.
- Encourage partnerships with US land-grant institutions and host country institutions for land rehabilitation and reclamation of damaged coastal aquaculture.
- Advise municipalities on protection and maintenance procedures for targeted farm-to-market access roads.
- Adapt appropriate USDA manuals into Spanish.
- Advise local and national institutions to secure and produce planting material for forestry, agroforestry, and other reclamation work.
- Assess irrigation rebuilding needs and provide reconstruction advice to host country counterparts.
- Provide temporary vegetative stabilization cover for critical areas using aerial seedling.

Recommended Environmental Determination: Completing initial assessments, identifying stakeholders, developing implementation and monitoring plans, adapting USDA manuals in Spanish, and reviewing aerial photographs and satellite images warrant **Categorical Exclusions** under 22 CFR 216.2(c)(2)(iii) – “Analyses, studies, academic or research workshops and meetings.”

Aerial seeding warrants a **Negative Determination** on the condition that environmental guidelines are developed that consider impacts of exotic grass or tree species if these are used, and location of aerial seeding vis-à-vis intact native ecosystems. LAC Bureau Environmental Officer will review and approve environmental guidelines for aerial seeding.

Recommending interventions for rehabilitating croplands, training in land rehabilitation and guidance using heavy equipment, advising municipalities on the protection and maintenance of roads, advising on securing and producing material for forestry, agroforestry, and other reclamation work, assessing irrigation rebuilding needs and providing reconstruction advice, and rehabilitating priority food crops, and site specific projects with land-grant universities could have indirect but, nevertheless, significant impacts on the environment. This is because these activities are primarily advising others on activities that might significantly impact the environment. At this time, because the specifics of these activities are not yet determined, they warrant **Deferred Determinations**. Individual supplemental IEEs will be submitted for these activities, for each country and/or region under the Inter-Agency Agreement. Supplemental IEEs will be based on the information developed for country specific workplans described in section F of the Schedule with the Inter-Agency Agreement between USDA and USAID for these activities.

Country or Region-based workplans will not be approved by the USAID Inter-Agency Agreement manager until the country-respective (or region-respective) supplemental IEE has been approved by the LAC Bureau Environmental Officer. The USAID Inter-Agency Agreement manager will work with USDA over the period of the workplan development to assure that implementation of USAID environmental regulations is effective and does not unnecessarily delay program implementation.

No pesticides will be procured with these USDA funds, nor used at USDA assisted sites without additional environmental review and approval of the LAC Bureau Environmental Officer.

### **IR3: Rural housing rehabilitated.**

Activities under this IR will help: (1) provide valuable construction technology skills to low income people; and (2) provide leadership skills to potential microentrepreneurs, and community and government leaders.

Expected activities include:

- Complete initial assessments.

- Identify stakeholders.
- Develop an implementation plan.
- Develop a performance monitoring plan.
- Provide guidance to build hurricane-resistant housing.
- Coordinate with US trade associations.
- Provide training in housing construction methods.

Recommended Environmental Determination: Completing initial assessments, identifying stakeholders, coordinating with US trade associations, assisting rural municipalities in developing emergency response teams, and providing Spanish training manuals warrant **Categorical Exclusions** under 22 CFR 216.2(c)(2)(i) -- “Education, technical assistance, or training programs except to the extent such programs include activities directly affecting the environment (such as construction of facilities, etc.)” -- and 22 CFR 216.2(c)(2)(iii) – “Analyses, studies, academic or research workshops and meetings.”

Developing implementation plans, performance monitoring plans, providing guidance on housing, and providing training in housing reconstruction methods warrant **Negative Determinations**, assuming that that appropriate environmental considerations will be incorporated into these activities. Specifically, monitoring plans will include noting whether environmental considerations are included successfully into activities receiving negative determinations.

#### **IR4: Local capacity to mitigate future storm effects strengthened.**

Activities under this IR will help: (1) farmers establish and maintain soil and water conservation practices; (2) enhance local capacity to use best management practices in watersheds; (3) identify alternative income sources to farmers using steep and vulnerable slopes; (4) identify credit and policy incentives to foster sound watershed management practices related to agriculture; and (5) train local institutions to provide on-going technical support in improved watershed management practices.

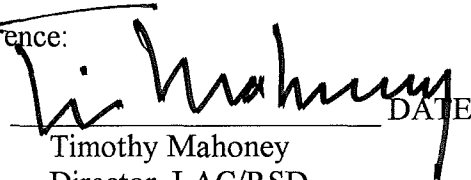
Expected activities include:

- Identify stakeholders.
- Develop an implementation plan.
- Develop a performance monitoring plan.
- Assessing the status of current on-farm soil and water conservation practices, and giving guidance on improving watershed management practices.
- Provide materials, training and extension in improved soil and water conservation practices.
- Identify and develop policy incentives, local agricultural innovations, credit incentives, and alternative employment opportunities that foster improved watershed management practices.

Recommended Environmental Determination: Identifying stakeholders, assessing the status of current on-farm practices, identifying and developing policy and credit incentives, and assisting rural municipalities in development emergency response teams warrant **Categorical Exclusions** under 22 CFR 216.2(c)(2) (xiv) – “Studies, projects or programs intended to develop the capability of recipient countries to engage in development planning, except to the extent designed to result in activities directly affecting the environment (such as construction of facilities, etc.).”

Developing implementation and monitoring plans, giving guidance, materials, training, and extension on improved soil and water conservation practices, developing local agricultural innovations and alternative employment opportunities warrant **Negative Determinations**. These activities are being developed to help the environment. For example, monitoring plans will include noting whether environmental considerations are included successfully into activities receiving negative determinations, and emphases will be placed on using native tree species as appropriate. No pesticides will be procured with these USDA funds, nor used at USDA assisted sites without additional environmental review and approval of the LAC Bureau Environmental Officer.

Concurrence:

  
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Timothy Mahoney  
Director, LAC/RSD

DATE

8-28-99

Drafted by: EFAJER:EF:5/26/99:Revised 7/15/99:U:\rsdpub\ees\iaa\iee\iee usda spo1.iaa.doc